

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

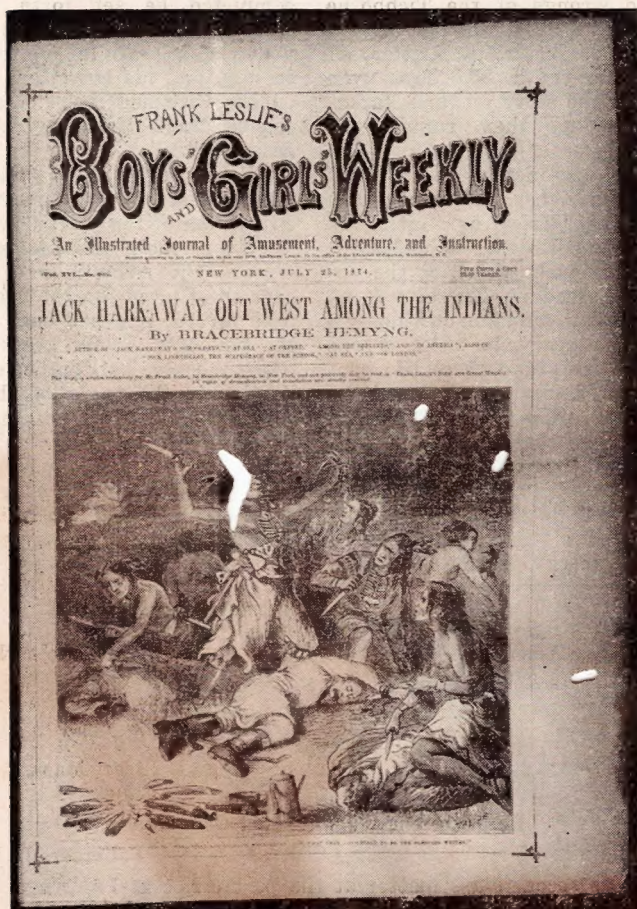
Vol. 21 No. 8

August 1953

Whole Number 251

JACK HARKAWAY — A PIONEER

by the Late Patrick Mulhall



From the LeBlanc Collection

JACK HARKAWAY — A PIONEER

by the Late Patrick Mulhall

of Castlecomer as related to his slave and scrivener Topchin Twiddlewinks

A. D. 1871—A memorial date in the annals of Boys Literature, for in that year there sprang into the limelight a boy whose name was to spread all round the world, and that without the aid of wireless or other modern contrivances.

Four score years ago Jack Harkaway made his debut in the pages of the Boys of England—one of the most popular journals of the period—and at a time when their elders were discussing such mundane affairs as the fall of the French Monarchy, the rights and wrongs of the Tichborne Claimant, the burning of the City of Chicago, or other trifling matters of no interest to youth. The boys were immersed in the story of Jack Harkaway's Schooldays then running in that paper.

It was a new departure in boys' school stories, very different from such tales as "Eric" or "Little by Little" or "Tom Brown's Schooldays", which too obviously aimed at the uplift of their readers. There was no tendency in that direction in this new type of school story, in which it was shown that boarding school life consisted of a succession of dormitory banquets and pillow fights, baiting the masters and their assistants, with an occasional barring out to relieve the monotony. Of such was the school in which the scene of Jack Harkaway was laid, and if there were any amount of dullness while he was there

the blame could not be laid to Jack's charge.

How Jack went travelling when his schooldays were over was told in a sequel entitled "Jack Harkaway After Schooldays" "Afloat & Ashore" dealing with his adventures whilst he and his friend, Dick Harvey, were engaged in exterminating the pirates of the Southern Seas and polishing off all evildoers in Northern latitudes, and all this at the age of sixteen years. His career formed the subject of the next serial, and then his education completed he set forth to do the Grand tour of Europe as became a young gentleman of his standing in society, and his travelling adventures on the Continent were related in the sequel "Jack Harkaway Among the Brigands".

All through this period during which these stories were running the circulation of the journal was increasing enormously and Jack's fame had crossed the Atlantic and spread all over the United States. The story had been pirated and had been running in the pages of Frank Leslie's Boys & Girls Weekly, hot-foot after its publication in the pages of the Boys of England. This was somewhat of a fly in the ointment for the publisher and conductor of that paper, Mr. Brett. But worse was in store for him. The story of Jack and the Brigands was nearing its end, the concluding chapters in the hands of the Editor, and

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Mr. Brett working his brains as to where Jack was to be sent next, when a whisper went round that Jack had been kidnapped, and that he and his chronicler, Bracebridge Hemming, were already on the high seas to America. Yes, it was too true. Hemming, a man of spirit, had grown weary of Brett's interference with regard to plot and incident of the story and had accepted an offer made by Frank Leslie of \$10,000 a year if he would come across to America and write exclusively for his papers. The offer was too tempting to refuse seeing that his pay with Bretts was only £2 per instalment.

Thereupon Leslie got moving to see that he got an adequate return for his ten thousand dollars a year job. His journals had a big circulation in the States. Wherever they went they carried the news that "Jack Harkaway" was coming, and further there were circus-style posters all over the place bearing the slogan "Watch for Jack Harkaway under the Stars and Stripes". The stage was set for the advent of Jack, and then when Hemming landed in New York there was a band to meet him as he came down the gangway, flags were flying and thousands of cheering boys lined the pier to give him such a reception as in these days is reserved for the most brilliant stars of the movie firmament.

That was in 1873 with war pending in the boys' world. The campaign was opened with the commencement of the story "Jack Harkaway in America" in the Boys & Girls Weekly in January 1874 and in the pages of the Young Englishman, which was run by George Emmett, a business rival of Bretts. Provoked by the move Bretts brought out an American edition of the Boys of England (and America) in which he stated that the Harkaway serials now running in the Boys and Girls Weekly were not by the genuine author of the original series, and that Mr. Hemming's only connection with them had been to receive instructions from Mr. Brett as to plot, incidents and characters for the forthcoming numbers. In a word only to string them together in narrative

form (as simple as that). He followed this by starting a serial dealing with Jack Harkaway's adventures in America in the Boys of England and written by an unknown member of the staff, but the readers were given to understand that it was the work of the original author.

The next move was from Hemming who made a sworn declaration before a public notary in New York that he was the sole author of the original Harkaway series, and that the story at present running in the Boys of England was only an imitation of his Harkaway.

He followed with a letter to the readers of the Emmett journals warning them not to be taken by Bretts tricks.

Well, the boy readers of Harkaway in the two English journals did not worry as to who wrote them, and it was likewise on the other side of the Atlantic where Brett's new Harkaways were being pirated by other publishers than Leslie. And so the war dragged on, the boys swapping journals in their eagerness to know how Jack was doing in each others papers, and getting mixed up as to where they had left him last week. The result being that after seven years Jack had to retire and take a rest.

He needed it indeed, and so did his chronicler. Hemming had lived up to the last penny of his salary, after the manner of those dear old conferees whom he had left behind him in Fleet Street. The Boys & Girls Weekly was losing ground, being crowded out by the new and far more vigorous and attractive papers which were now well established in the field and which were solely for boys. There were new immortals to bow before, such as Buffalo Bill, Old Sleuth and Joe Phoenix the detectives, and Jack's reign was over.

Hemming's efforts to form new connections met with meagre financial results. He had written scores of boys stories other than Harkaway for the American papers, but they were really only stop gaps while Jack was away on his travels. He was in a groove in which he had to stay, and

so the time came when he had to make up his mind to return to England and begin life again. Back to his old haunts he found it difficult to get going again as his place on the old papers was taken up by new writers. Gone were the days when at times he was in such request that at one period he was running six serials simultaneously.

He had been called to the Bar in his very early days, but had never practised, having a bent for a literary career. From this it can be understood why he had not much success when he attempted to take up Law again as a career. He had no connections formed and he was late in the day.

And so perforce, he had to return to Brett for employment and to join the Dark Brotherhood of anonymous authors who wrote for the Boys of England and other of Bretts papers. (Brett had never published an author's name from the time of Hemyng's defection).

From then onwards he wrote many serials for the Brett papers, among them a revival of the Harkaway stories, this time dealing with the adventures of "Harkaway the Third" the original Jack's grandson, and he was writing boys stories to the end of his life.

Strange to say his memory is held in high regard in the United States, where his books never ran out of print until the years when paper got scarce, while he seems to be completely forgotten in his native England.

After his return to England he lived a quiet and contented life, glad to be able to make a living, with no longings to return to the scene of his hectic six or seven years, and in 1901 at the age of 61, fifty years ago he went to his eternal rest. R. I. P.

Perhaps a quotation from a poem written by an old admirer of Jack Harkaway about 40 years ago (John Ludlow in the New York Herald) may not be out of place here:

Jack Harkaway! Jack Harkaway

The author's heart liest still

And voiceless now this many a year
His gallant English quill

And nowhere on the starry peaks
And pinnacles of fame
Has time a proud memorial raised
To Bracebridge Hemyng's name
But could each Boy that he endeared
To that lone grave repair
In fond remembrance piously
To drop one blossom there
A mountain beautiful and grand
Of flowers would hide the clay
Where moulder in the dust the hand
That wrote Jack Harkaway.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

By Frisco Bert, the Famous Scout

"BANG! BANG! BANG! And fourteen redskins bit the dust, as Silent Sam, The Slippery Swamp Scout, bit off a chunk of chewing tobacco and notched up the stock of his faithful rifle.

"HELP! HELP! HELP!" Three times upon the midnight air, so cold and clear, rang the piercing terrified screams of terror of a terrified maiden in distress.

Sounds silly now, eh wot? But it wasn't silly in the 19th Century or in the early decade of this century. We had no airplanes then, no automobiles, no moving pictures, no television, no macadamized roads or streets. The most exciting thing that happened weekly in towns and cities throughout the nation was the arrival of bundles of nickel and dime novels from New York City and which were placed on sale in our bookstore-newsstands. Of course we all got a thrill when fire alarms were turned in and those grand horses came charging over the cobblestones dragging the heavy fire-wagons behind them, the fireman stoking the fire under the fire engine with one hand while hanging on for dear life with the other hand. But we had Free Lunches in all saloons with a quart of sudsy beer all for a nickel in them gude ole daze, Folks. According to the quality of the saloon the variety and quality of the free lunch ranged up to 10 to twenty platters of various meats, cheeses, breads, crackers, etc.

Yup, we read our nickel and dime novels and Frank Merriwell, Fred

Fearnot, Jesse James, Old and Young King Brady were better known throughout the nation than 95% of the Representatives and Senators making up our Congress. Who cared about a Congressman or a Senator anyway, especially when we left Young Wild West staked out on an anthill by the cruel Apaches, alone on the burning desert, surrounded by 19 huge diamondback rattlesnakes (or was it 18?), buzzards circling overhead, coyotes wailing as they too closed in for a juicy bite of man meat. So we rushed down and got copy No. Eleventy Steen to see how Young Wild West, the Saddle King, got out of his predickelment. Know what? He expanded his chest by sucking in the pure desert air; his arms lubricated by perspiration and with a mighty heave he burst his bonds and he leaped to his feet, scaring the buzzards so badly they went flying far away; the frightened kiotes went over the hill squealing like dogs with tin cans tied to their tails, the rattlesnakes went streaking away to their holes, the ants disappeared into the anthill and Young Wild West whistled and wot happened? Heck, his noble horse galloped up with one saddle bag full of good fresh chow, the other holding a canteen of cool pure water, rifle and pistols and ammunition and his bedroll all intact and away he went to get to Arietta.

Sound silly? Sure it does now. But not then. They were the popular national pastime of nearly all boys old enough to know how to read and hundreds of thousands of adults found them exciting, entertaining, fascinating and amusing. They still interest the old timers whose memories are keen enough to remember that far back but with every passing day more and more of those old timers die out of the picture. Those who once kept the hobby going as a means of making a living supplying us collectors, James Madison, Charlie Austin, Marcoske, Benners, Caldwell, and a host of other fine men have joined the old-time scouts on their Last Roundup, leaving behind their collections of novels that have since gone into other hands or have been scattered and

sold broadcast. We oldsters know our days are numbered too and all too soon (for us) and not soon enough (for those waiting to inherit) and it saddens us to see the old novels get brittle with age and then see somebody advertising for a novel that was printed sixty years ago in New York and shipped to Frisco and sold for 5¢ and saying, "must be mint new" "in excellent condition" "superfine—no stain—no stamp—no tears—no this and no that," etc., etc. How optimistic can an optimist's optimism be, optimistically speaking from a cigarettic-alc standpoint that is.

But our hobbies help to lengthen life by giving us something to drive dull care away. It is only giving up all activities of mind and body that brings on quick rot and death. A hobby keeps a hobbyist on his or her toes, peps them up and puts zip in living. Having no children I adopted several hobbies years ago, nickel and dime novel collecting being one of my hobbies. Via letters I met some wonderful people, all those named above, who have gone on ahead of me and whom I will join in time. But until the time comes I am having a lot of fun. Knowing how much enjoyment I really have had from novel collecting I hope I may say something that will help others to work harder to complete the series of blood and thunders they like best or to acquire a wide variety of all the various series. The flashy, scary covers will always be of interest to the younger generations as curiosities if nothing more.

Twenty years ago we had over 300 novel collectors active. Now we have about half that number. Incidentally with the recent change in ownership of The Round Up it seems to be a good time for a readjustment of Members' Numbers. An announcement can be made by Ye Editor that "On January 1, 1954, Members' numbers will be moved up to start with No. 1 on to the actual membership numbered consecutively." Any old timers coming back in with renewal of subscription, etc., would take up a new number following the latest one to subscribe and join.

Mr. Flaum's suggestion on getting

new members is a good one. (Incidentally I had written Editor-Publisher LeBlanc about stirring up the membership sometime before I learned from Mr. Flaum he had written an article upon the same subject). I suggest that each member who knows an old time member who has dropped out of novel activity should go after the backslider and get him back into the fold, especially to get him to release his novels to the new collectors at fair prices or to get him back into collecting actively again. Get the new members too, by all means and by any means, but go after the old collectors and get them back into the fold once more with the rest of us. Time is fugitive and tempus is flying. "A pleasure shared is a pleasure doubled," as one of our old friends used to say down on the farm. So as Mr. Flaum suggested, let a good friend (who knows how to handle and WILL handle CAREFULLY your oldest cheapest novels) read a novel or two. Personally I use my coverless novels for this purpose. Nobody will take as good care of your treasures as you will any more than they do the cutting tools you lend a pal always come home duller than they were when you loaned them.

The magazine need not continue to be a four sheet affair. Whip up the rest of that old 300 active members we had and then start picking up a little friendly advertising from your favorite drugstore, ice cream parlor, etc., and that will call for more pages and each page means additional space also for reading material of interest to us. The subscription rate of a magazine won't buy the paper and printing alone. Go into any stationery store. Show them a copy of any slick magazine, Life for instance. Tell the clerk you want that much paper of the same quality for the price the magazine sells for. You won't get it. Yet a full page ad in Life will cost about \$25,000.00. So if Friend LeBlanc hits the ball to get some OUTSIDE advertising the money will begin coming in that will build this magazine right on up into a magazine that will be a money maker and justify his putting his full time into building up this

publication that before this has never been anything but a little gossip sheet that a select few of us enjoyed all these years. We will continue to enjoy it more and more as it grows bigger and bigger and advertising will not be restricted solely to the diminishing membership list. Circulation gets advertising . . . advertising increases circulation, more of both means the subscription price will go lower and lower as the magazine gets bigger and bigger and we will have many fine, long articles and exciting information brought out for the entertainment and education of Round Up readers, more illustrations, new writers. The growth of the magazine, the personal property of the publisher, of course, depends upon how hard he works at the job and his ambition as to what he wants to make out of it. His is the hardest job and his is the greatest reward for the most work done.

The more corn a farmer plants the more corn he reaps the following season. The less he plants the less he will reap. The same thing applies to labor . . . the more that is planted the more it will blossom . . . the richer the reward. When a farmer digs a hole in the ground and drops in two or three grains of corn he doesn't see just the yellow grains of corn. He is looking at the tall green stalk bearing those luscious roasting ears, corn on the cob, creamed corn, etc., and he works at the job of making those measly little corn grains grow into high waving cornfields. The harder the farmer works at his job the bigger the crop will be that he reaps. It is up to the farmer to decide whether he is a working farmer or a lazy farmer and in either case the "servant is worthy of his hire" and is usually paid according to the amount of labor expended.

Anybody's suggestions will be welcomed by Ye Editor-Publisher LeBlanc but all will not necessarily be adopted. Heckaroo, some guy might suggest that he go jump in the creek. I wouldn't say that for then where would we be with no Ye Editor-Publisher of Ye Olde Dime Novele Rounde Uppe? Has any reader had amateur

publishing experience in his past? Why not speak up and share your suggestions with Eddie? I wouldn't be surprised if he doesn't give some kind of prize, quien sabe, maybe a pair of cut glass shoe laces or a novel or two for the suggestion that he feels is most helpful to him in keeping the Roundup alive and going, the decision to be his own and final in case he really should dish out some sort of a prize for the most constructive suggestions on how to build up the tiny little Roundup into a Papa-sized publication. HOBBIES Magazine was built up just exactly that way. So was the now famous SUNSET Magazine on the Pacific Coast. Once an advertiser hears of any magazine being subscribed to by the kind of people he wants to sell to he will gladly pay for space in that publication. If the Gamblers of America put out a monthly magazine every manufacturer of loaded dice, marked cards, etc., would scramble to get his advertisement into that magazine. Every gambler in the country would buy a copy of the magazine just to get names and addresses of such manufacturers, a delightful cycle, everybody making money, for the readers would get ideas themselves worth more than the price of the magazine. Even the printer who now prints it might like to get HIS ad into The Roundup and pay for his space by reducing his charge for the overall printing cost. No end of suggestions, Brether, how about sending Editor LeBlanc YOUR ideas and suggestions so we can all enjoy hearing them. Yours Till Sitting Bull Stands Up and Standing Cow Sits Down, FRISCO BERT, THE FAMOUS SCOUT.

QUESTION AND ANSWER COLUMN

Samuel Olnhausen of 824 Chester Avenue, East Liverpool, Ohio, asks: How many titles were issued of the cloth bound Merriwell Series published by Davie McKay.

No answer has been forthcoming on the editor's question asked in the 1st issue.

The next issue of the Round-up

will contain an article on Charlie Miller, the last of the Pony Express Riders, by Charlie Duprez and another installment of Mr. Leithead's article "Buckskin Men of Forest and Plain."

(Advertisements)

EXCHANGES COLUMN

WANTED—Golden Hours #18 91 92 93 157 to 208 254 255 256 281 287 288 321 322 428 469 to 494. Payment in dollars. A. W. Lawson, 13 Charles Square, London, N 1, England.

Over 500 small size Wolfe Reprints, Pluck and Luck, Work and Win, Fame and Fortune, Wild West, Liberty Boys all fine, mostly mint condition, 5 for \$1.00 in lots of 25 or more. Postage extra. Roy E. Swannstrom, New Brighton 10, Minnesota.

My advertisement in the preceding number of the Round-up still holds. Albert Johannsen, Box 566, Winter Park, Florida.

Who wants old story papers such as Saturday Nights, Golden Days, Family Story Paper, Youths Companion and love stories of all kinds? Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville Mass.

I STILL NEED

the following numbers of TIP TOP WEEKLY (or TIP TOP LIBRARY). Must be in very nice clean sound condition, at least 7x10½ in size, in original colored covers, and with no stamps of a disfiguring nature; no tape or other repair work; no browned or brittle pages, and no wrinkled, frayed, soiled or stained covers:

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I will pay FOUR DOLLARS EACH for the above issues if in the condition described.

Can also use 76 issues between 400 and 500 in the same nice condition described above. Will pay \$1.00 each. Send lists.

J. P. GUINON

P. O. Box 214, Little Rock, Arkansas

New address—Fred Lee, Room 204 Fair Bldg., 40 Jackson Place, Indianapolis, Ind.

New Member—Bill Martin, 93 Hillside, Harlesden, London, N. W. 10, England.

FOR SALE—Aldine Buffalo Bills, Robin Hoods, Dick Turpin and numerous others including early edition Hentys, Capt. Brereton, Percy Westermans. State wants.

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Roy E. Swanstrom

New Brighton 10, Minnesota

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BRITISH RAILWAYS , By A. Alton, 1946. Illus. in color and Black and White	
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BEIQUE'S Swappers & Collectors Directory #1 , 1953	
	2.50

Ralph F. Cummings

Fisherville, Mass.